

## **BGKT Buddhist Group of Kendal (Theravada) Founding in 1991 Anniversaries and History**

29 April 2024

BGKT Buddhist Group of Kendal (Theravada) was founded in September 1991, and is the second oldest Theravada Buddhist Group in Cumbria. Articles were written to celebrate the 25th and 30th anniversaries in 2016 and 2021.

### **BGKT Buddhist Group of Kendal (Theravada) 30th Anniversary 2021**

*Lancaster District Magazine* published an anniversary article

### **Buddhist Group of Kendal (Theravada) BGKT 30th anniversary 2021**



In 2021 BGKT Buddhist Group of Kendal (Theravada) celebrated the 30th anniversary of its founding in 1991. The Theravada School of Buddhism is the oldest school of Buddhism and is practiced in the five Theravada Buddhist countries of South and South East Asia.

BGKT holds a monthly public open meeting on the 3rd Sunday of the month (except December) at Castle Street Centre Kendal. All are welcome. Free.

Venerable Dr Balangoda Ananda Maitreya Mahanayaka Thera Aggamaha Pandita Abhidhaja Maharatthaguru DLitt DLitt (1896-1998) (one of the world's most senior Theravada Buddhist Monks), and Venerable Henepola Gunaratana Maha Thera (an internationally respected meditation master and author) agreed to become BGKT's Founder Spiritual Advisors. Venerable Ananda Maitreya's 125th birth anniversary in August 2021 was celebrated by BGKT. Venerable Dr Balangoda Ananda Maitreya Mahanayaka Thera Abhidhaja Maharatthaguru Aggamaha Pandita DLitt DLitt (1896 - 1998) and BGKT Secretary Jacquetta Gomes's booklet *Introducing Buddhism* has been published in Malaysia, Sri Lanka, Taiwan, UK, and USA.

Venerable Pidiville Piyatissa Maha Thera, (Head of Ketumati Buddhist Vihara Manchester), has taught and offered Precepts and Dhamma Teaching certificates at BGKT since 1999. BGKT also attend events at Ketumati. BGKT has led Metta loving kindness meditation at meditation retreats at Ketumati.

BGKT has run joint meetings and retreats with Keswick Buddhist Group (Theravada) who have supported us since 1991. We have good relations with and are in regular contact with other small Cumbrian Buddhist Groups. Long before zoom, we developed CMDM Cumbria Moon Day Meditation in 2008 to enable us to practice together at the same time from home. Attendees of the Theravada Buddhist Groups in Cumbria meditate at home from 7-9 pm on the four monthly moon days. BGKT and Keswick Buddhist Group engaged on a daily basis during Covid-19 to ensure that none of our members were isolated. On Thursdays we started a weekly day meditation retreat we participated in from home to keep us together. One of our members who lives in the countryside photographed her garden and to keep us all in touch with the changing seasons.

Vesak, celebrated on the May full moon marks three events in the life of the Buddha: birth, enlightenment, and passing away. BGKT is fortunate to have a beautiful Vesak lantern made by one of BGKT's members. This has gained national recognition.

BGKT's writings have been included in *The Tibetan Buddhist Encyclopaedia* and *The Buddhist eLibrary* and journals. The internationally respected New York based Buddhist magazine *Tricycle* (which is also celebrating its 30th anniversary) included BGKT in an article in the Spring 2016 issue.

BGKT's library received a donation of books from the library of Ajahn Pannavaddho Thera (the most senior western Monk in Thailand) (1925 – 2004).

BGKT participates in local interfaith activities. WIHW World Interfaith Harmony Week and Inter Faith Week are celebrated in Kendal. The Inter Faith Network of the UK acknowledged Kendal as the smallest town to hold an 8 day Inter Faith Week programme in the 8 day Inter Faith Week in 2017 and 2020.

BGKT is represented on the Organising Committee of CUF Cumbria Unity Festival and KUF Kendal Unity Festival. Venerable Pidiville Piyatissa led a session of mindfulness and meditation on behalf of BGKT for CUF Cumbria Unity Festival on 19 June 2021. BGKT ran stalls in 2018 and 2019. In 2019 BGKT also helped run the Multifaith Quiet/Prayer/Meditation Room.

BGKT is active in the local community. The BGKT Secretary is the Lead for Interfaith and Multifaith for SLEDP South Lakeland Equality and Diversity Partnership which is represented on the Kendal ICC Integrated Care Community. The BGKT Secretary represented minority faiths on the South Lakeland Hub Recovery Group after Storm

Desmond. BGKT was invited to join the Cumbria BSP Bereavement Support Partnership Group during the Covid-19 pandemic. BGKT is also a Buddhist contact for Cumbria County Council Emergency Planning.

Weblink <https://www.lancasterdistrict.co.uk/buddhist-group-of-kendal-theravada-bgkt-30th-anniversary-2021/>

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### **BGKT Buddhist Group of Kendal (Theravada) 25th anniversary 2016**

*News Lanka* newspaper published an anniversary article

BGKT Buddhist Group of Kendal (Theravada) celebrated the 25th anniversary of its founding in September 1991 at a retreat on 25 September 2016 at Fellside Centre Kendal led by Venerable Pidiville Piyatissa Head of Ketumati Buddhist Vihara Manchester and Venerable Udunuwara Indarathana. The Theravada School of Buddhism is the oldest school of Buddhism and is practiced in the five Theravada Buddhist countries of Sri Lanka, Burma, Thailand, Laos and Cambodia.

Lama Yeshe Rinpoche Abbot and Retreat Master of Kagyu Samye Ling Monastery and Tibetan Centre in Scotland sent a beautiful sentence on Buddhist traditions working together, which was read out at the celebrations.

Venerable Pidiville Piyatissa Maha Thera, Head of Ketumati Buddhist Vihara Manchester, has been teaching and offering Precepts for BGKT since 1999. Ketumati acquired a beautiful new Monastery in 2015 which has offered us opportunities to develop our Buddhist practice. We assist by leading meditation at meditation retreats.

Venerable Dr Balangoda Ananda Maitreya *Mahanayaka Thera Aggamaha Pandita Abhidhaja Maharathaguru* DLitt DLitt one of the world's most senior Theravada Buddhist Monks and Venerable Henepola Gunaratana *Maha Thera* (an internationally respected meditation master and author) agreed to become BGKT's spiritual advisors.

Many other senior Monks have visited BGKT at Fellside Centre including a cave dwelling Monk from Sri Lanka. Venerable Medagama Vajiragnana Mahanayaka Thera OBE the most senior Sri Lankan Monk in the UK visited in 2000. A collection of books from the library of Ajahn Pannyavaddho Thera ((1925 – 2004) the most senior western monk in Thailand) was donated to BGKT's library.

We have good relations with and are in regular contact with other small Cumbrian Buddhist Groups. Special mention must be made of Keswick Theravada Buddhist Group with which we have run joint meetings and retreats and who have supported us since 1991.

Some of our attendees became unable to attend meetings because of family commitments. We all wished to find an ongoing way to continue practising together. In 2008 CMDM Cumbria Moon Day Meditation started enabling attendees of the Theravada Buddhist Groups in Cumbria to meditate at home from 7-9 pm on the four monthly moon days.

We led a meditation and gave a talk at the Sakyadhita UK (International Association of Buddhist Women) meeting at Fellside Centre Kendal in 2009.

We have a close relationship with Kendal Town Council. The Mayor of Kendal usually attends to BGKT's annual Vesak celebrations. Vesak, celebrated on the May full

moon marks three events in the life of the Buddha: birth, enlightenment, and passing away. BGKT has led the prayers before a Kendal Town Council meeting, walked in the Mayor's Sunday Civic Procession and attended Mayor Making Ceremonies. Councillor Gwen Murfin, Mayor of Kendal requested that a celebration Pali Blessing Ceremony be conducted in the Mayor's Parlour in Kendal Town Hall in 2007, to celebrate Jacquetta Gomes's inclusion in *Burkes Landed Gentry* as a Contemporary Person of Distinction.

BGKT is represented on the South Lakeland Community Recovery Group for the floods, and on SLEDP South Lakeland Equality and Diversity Partnership. BGKT ran a Pilot Project on faith with CFRS Cumbria Fire and Rescue Service at Kendal Fire Station and produced the first acknowledged female Buddhist Fire Chaplain in the world.

Members have taken part in interfaith activities in South Lakeland. We attended the enthronement of Rt Rev James Newcombe as the Bishop of Carlisle, at Carlisle Cathedral in 2009. BGKT has spoken at several Conferences including the *Manchester Buddhist Convention*.

*Introducing Buddhism* by Venerable Dr Balangoda Ananda Maitreya Mahanayaka Thera Abhidhaja Maharathaguru Aggamaha Pandita DLitt DLitt (1896-1998) and Jacquetta Gomes has been published in Malaysia, Sri Lanka, Taiwan, UK, and USA. BGKT's writings have been included in *The Tibetan Buddhist Encyclopaedia* and *The Buddhist eLibrary* and journals. We contributed to an article in the Spring 2016 issue of the internationally respected New York based Buddhist journal *Tricycle* (which is also celebrating its 25th anniversary).

We hope the next 25 years will be as wonderful, beneficial and peaceful as the first. We are very grateful to everyone who has supported us. We find it helpful to practise with people we have been in contact with for over 20 years but are also very happy when new people join us.